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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001398

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [Z1](#)

SUBJECT: MDC REUNIFICATION: THE WAY FORWARD

REF: HARARE 1360

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher Dell under Section 1.4 b/d

SUMMARY

[11](#). (C) A little more than a year after its acrimonious split in October 2005, the MDC may be heading for reunification. Despite financial and organizational challenges, the opposition made inroads into ruling party strongholds in recent local elections reinforcing with leaders in both factions that they could have done even better working as a united party. Reunification has the apparent support of faction leaders Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara, but hardliners in both camps fear that reintegration would cost them power and influence and they could yet derail efforts to patch up differences. End Summary.

REUNIFICATION: THE WAY FORWARD?

[12](#). (C) In spite of the financial and organizational challenges resulting from a split MDC, the opposition made some encouraging inroads into ruling party strongholds during the latest Rural District Council (RDC) elections (reftel). Senior leaders from both factions told us that a united party could have picked up even more seats, and that a reunited front is essential in mounting the strongest challenge to ZANU-PF in the presidential election in 2008 and the parliamentary elections in 2010. Their initial instinct is to use the lesson as a catalyst for renewing talks about reunification. To this end, the two factions held separate executive retreats on Saturday, November 4 to discuss, among

other issues, the consequences of the split and the best way forward.

13. (C) Reunification is gaining support at the highest levels in each camp. Morgan Tsvangirai, president of the anti-Senate faction, and Arthur Mutambara, president of the pro-Senate faction, are reportedly in agreement that merging the factions is the only way forward. Tendai Biti, secretary general of the anti-Senate faction, recently told Ambassador Dell that many of the senior leaders in the Tsvangirai camp, including himself and Elton Mangoma, the deputy treasurer, strongly support the move. For his part, Mutambara has met several times with anti-Senate leadership within the past months, including a one-on-one meeting with Tsvangirai.

14. (C) Both camps, however, have hardliners that passionately resist the idea. On the anti-Senate side, these reportedly include Lucia Matibenga, the women's caucus leader in the party, and Elias Mudzuri, the national organizing secretary; notable on the pro-Senate side are Secretary General Welshman Ncube, a driving force behind the initial split, and his deputy, Pricilla Misihairabwi-Mushonga.

COMMENT: THE CHANCES FOR SUCCESS

15. (C) What gives reunification a chance for success is the support of the top leaders on both sides, who have appointed negotiating teams, and the increasing realization of many in both factions that a united opposition is a stronger opposition. A reunited MDC, according to even some of our

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ZANU-PF interlocutors (reftel), would have a strong chance of winning a free and fair election.

16. (C) Reconciliation leading to reunification, however, may yet prove difficult. Deep personal differences between senior leadership on both sides led to the split in the first place and things have become even more rancorous over the last year as the two sides have waged a public battle against one another. Furthermore, significant intra-faction dissent in both camps may yet be enough to scuttle the move. With presidential elections now scheduled for 2008, the next several months will be crucial if the MDC is to reunify and put the opposition back on the path toward reinvigorating the base, attracting new supporters, and ultimately getting out the vote.

DELL